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ABSTRACT

This discussion about voucher education is based largely upon the model developed by Christopher Jencks and his associates. Its major features include: equal tuition grants to all children; compensatory grants to the disadvantaged child; tuition maximum equal to the voucher value in all eligible schools; no parental supplementation of vouchers permitted; and, seats apportioned 50 percent by nondiscriminatory standard, 50 percent by lottery of their applicants. The advantages of voucher education are found to include the following: Halting the present situation in which only the rich and those with support from religious institutions can escape public schools, and in which economic class separation is made easy. Increasing economic and political power of individuals over their children's education. Making possible not only geographically decentralized schools, but school communities based on many other shared values. Providing effective means for preventing racial and economic discrimination and for insuring the presence of adequate resources for all school children. Four other advantages are given. The disadvantages of voucher education are found to include the following: Voucher education could not prevent the emergence of voluntarily segregated schools. Voucher education violates the constitutional separation of religion and education. Four other disadvantages are given. (JM)

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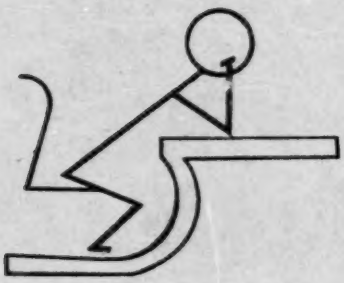

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EDUCATIONAL VOUCHERS:

PANACEA OR PANDORA'S BOX?

Prepared for the New Jersey Education Reform Project

By

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April. 1974

Voucher education is a method for financing education by giving to parents vouchers of a pre-determined value, which they give to the school where they choose to send their children. The school then redeems the voucher for cash.

The use of vouchers as a means of financing education is hardly new. Adam Smith, in 1778, suggested that parents be responsible for the salary of the local schoolmaster, if they were satisfied with his performance.[1] Tom Paine worked out a plan for tax rebates to educate the children of parents too poor to pay.[2] Almost a century later, John Stuart Mill, worried about government control of curriculum, suggested that the best way for the state to fulfill its obligation to educate the public was to hold all parents legally responsible for the education of their own children, underwriting the expenses of those who could not afford to pay.[3]

These notions of voucher education did not command great public attention until the late 1960's, when discontent with the performance of the schools, fear of the growing educational bureaucracy, the recognition of the inequalities inherent in the present method of financing education through property tax revenues, and a feeling that the educational system had ceased to be responsive to the needs of the children it served, made those interested in educational reform look for alternatives outside the present arrangement for providing public education.

There are three major variations on the theme of voucher education. While many have recently become interested in vouchers, the three 'models' are the respective proposals of 1) Milton Friedman; 2) John Coons, Stephen Sugarman, and William Clune; and 3) Christopher Jencks and the Center for the Study of Public Policy (CSPP).

Milton Friedman's original proposal differed very little from that of John Stuart Mill, and included direct parental spending on education, eliminating the government's job as tax collector and administrator of the funds. Parents who could not afford the costs of their children's education from their own resources would be aided by the government. Recognizing that such a program was not politically feasible, Freidman revised his proposal to include a per pupil expenditure voucher to be granted to parents for every school age child in the family. Parents could send their children wherever they chose, and could supplement the value of the voucher from their own resources.

Such a system, argues Friedman, would widen the choices available to parents both within the present system and in the variety of new schools that would spring up under such a program to compete with the present schools. It would allow parents to influence school policy through their role as consumer; and would, by encouraging competition, force schools to reform in order to survive in such a competitive situation. And, because business interests could now enter

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the market, says Friedman, the delivery of educational services would become more efficient and economical. In his September 23, 1973, article in the New York Times, he draws the analogy this way:

> The delivery of groceries is not the same as the production of hi-fi- equipment. Yet both are highly efficient and technologically progressive for the same reason: They are conducted mostly by private enterprise operating in a competitive market. 4

A second voucher education model is that one proposed by Coons, Sugarman, and Clune, three lawyers concerned with the inequal distribution of educational resources under the present property-tax funded system of public education. Their proposal is a bit more complex than Friedman's. Each school in a district that wanted to be eligible for vouchers would fix its per pupil expenditure at one of four levels. This might mean that a school district would have schools with per pupil expenditures of $500, $800, $1,000, and $1,500. Parents would decide to which of those schools they wished to send their children, and then tax themselves at a corresponding rate to raise educational revenues. Thus a parent wishing to send his child to the least expensive of the schools would tax himself at the lowest rate, while parents wishing to send their children to the most expensive school would tax themselves at the highest rate. The cost to the parent would be calculated on a progressive schedule so that even the tax level corresponding to the highest level school would not be beyond the reach of a poor family. This would have a redistributive effect, with the cost to the

affluent sometimes being more than the per pupil expenditure level of the chosen school, so that the excess could be used to augment the payment of a poor family whose contribution would fall short of the per pupil expenditure.

As with Friedman's proposal, parents would have a choice of which school was desirable for their children. Unlike Friedman's proposal, parents would not be permitted to supplement their contribution with personal resources.

This system of vouchers overcomes the problem of inequal distribution of educational resources, without forcing parents to accept a single level of education. If the quality of a child's education is a product of the amount of money spent on it, parents would be free to determine how important it was to them to purchase the "best" services available.[5]

The third voucher model is one designed by Christopher Jencks and the Center for the Study of Public Policy. This research group outlined seven possible voucher models, and concluded that what they called the 'regulated compensatory model' was the most feasible and equitable. In such a model, all parents would receive a voucher for each school age child worth the same amount. In the cases of children who came from poor families, or who had learning problems, (or who in one way or another qualified as "disadvantaged"), parents would be given a compensatory supplement to the value of the basic voucher to enhance the attractiveness of that child to schools, and to meet his or her higher educational costs.

The regulatory aspect of the model applies to the admissions policies of participating schools. In the case more students applied than a school had places, the school could select the first 50% based on some pre-determined standard that was not discriminatory. The remaining 50% of the seats would be apportioned by a lottery among those students not expressly selected.[6]

This model, argues its authors, prevents the possibility of discriminatory policies in accepting students, and compensates for children with problems who might otherwise be rejected by most schools. In addition, like the Friedman model, new schools would open to attract students, and force the already existing schools to improve in order to survive.

Since voucher education is primarily a way of financing education, the first question to be asked about these three models pertains to their economic advantages and disadvantages. It may be immediately noted that only the Coons, Sugarman and Clune model makes any attempt to talk about the raising of revenues to finance voucher education, and even there, the authors did not specify whether an income tax or a property tax would be the basis on which a parent would impose on themselves the education tax. The absence in the discussions of from where the revenues are to come is due to the nature of the voucher plans as methods of <u>distributing</u> educational resources. Problems must be viewed within that framework, leaving to the planners of a voucher system the design of the method to raise the necessary revenues.

The Freidman model not only does not compensate for the problems of the children of poor parents, even ignoring the effect of the present system, but his proposal may indeed also increase the disparities in the per pupil expenditures between the children of poor parents and those of affluent parents. In a time when the property tax has been questioned because of the disparities it creates between per pupil expenditures in different districts, Friedman's model can hardly be considered politically feasible, even in its revised state.

The Coons, Sugarman, and Clune model, while compensating for the differing abilities of parents to pay for education, still allows the possibility for inequalities to arise through the option parents have to determine the quality of their children's education based on their willingness to pay. If it is true, as it has been argued in the past[7], that parents of lower income and education place a lower value on education, the present inequalities could be reproduced if parents were allowed to let that lower estimation of the value of education determine where their child went to school.

The Jencks and CSPP model, while it does compensate for "disadvantaged" children, and attempts to prevent discrimination, has been attacked because it denies the parent the freedom to choose to spend more than the basic amount on education in any school eligible for vouchers. It is, however, probably

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the most equitable of the three, and will serve as the model for the remainder of this discussion about voucher education. To reiterate, its major features include:

- equal tuition grants to all children
- compensatory grants to the disadvantaged child
- tuition maximum equal to the voucher value in all eligible schools
- no parental supplementation of vouchers permitted
- seats apportioned 50% by non-discriminatory standard, 50% by lottery of other applicants

The EVA

The first step in beginning a voucher program would be the establishment of the central administrative unit - the Educational Voucher Agency. The responsibilities of the EVA would fall into six major categories:[8]

a) general administration
b) establishing school eligibility
c) collecting and disseminating information to parents
d) technical assistance
e) districting and transporting
f) accountability

a) <u>general administration</u>

The range of activities which can be classified as general administration might include: collecting federal, state, and local funds with which to pay for the vouchers; setting the value of the basic voucher grant; disbursing funds to schools; managing transportation systems; determining the standard for the compensatory grant, and the dollar value of that grant; and any other general administrative duties not covered in any other part of the administration.

b) establishing school eligibility requirements

It is this part of the Educational Voucher Agency's responsilities which pertain to determining what kinds of admissions procedures are acceptable in the eligible schools, and whether or not schools meet minimum standards to allow them to receive voucher funds. It is of vital importance that the admissions policies of schools be set in such a way that they do not discriminate, either intentionally or otherwise. For best results, the Educational Voucher Agency should identify in advance admissions policies which would, because of known factors, have a discriminatory effect, and should annually review the admissions policies of the eligible schools to guard against the possibility of invidious discrimination. In addition, admissions policies must deal not only with the problem of student selection, but also with transfer and dismissal policies.

Because the schools will be funded through government funds, it is reasonable for the Educational Voucher Agency to insist that certain minimum requirements are met, such as programs in schools which assure the literacy of all students, and standards of school safety. How extensive these minimum standards are is up to the Educational Voucher Agency, as is the task of ascertaining whether or not eligible schools meet the minimum standards.

c) collecting and disseminating information to parents

In order to make informed choices about where to send their children, parents will need two kinds of information. The first kind will tell parents what kinds of general standards the Educational Voucher Agency recommends parents take into account in their choice of schools. This is especially important for parents who have never before sent their children to schools other than those provided in the public system, who might otherwise be at a disadvantage in choosing wisely for their children.

The second kind of information would deal with the specific programs offered by the eligible schools. Schools would of course be able to produce their own information, but the Educational Voucher Agency also has a responsibility to see that parents can obtain information about the schools collected by an impartial agency. The collection of information about the different schools could be carried out by the staff of the EVA, or could be contracted out to independent information collection agencies. The dissemination of this information should be accompanied by counseling services available to aid parents in their selection.

d) technical assistance

Under a voucher program, the state department of education's role in collecting information and guiding curriculum development in public schools would no longer exist. It would be replaced by the services of the EVA in amassing the same sort

of information that would be available to schools if they were to need it. Technical assistance of this sort would also be available to independent groups wishing to establish new schools, as well as assistance which would instruct them on how to meet minimum standards and construct non-discriminatory admissions policies.

e) <u>districting and transporting</u>

In order for all children to have equal opportunities to attend the school their parents have chosen, transportation must be provided. A lack of publicly funded transportation might support <u>de facto</u> segregation by making it more expensive for parents to send children outside the immediate geographic area. How exactly the transportation is to be funded is up to the Educational Voucher Agency. It might include in the basic value of the voucher a provision to meet the transportation cost to the chosen school. It might also run its own transportation system, scheduling the routes after school selections have been completed.

Even with transportation provided, limits must still be set as to how far a child may travel to the chosen school. The drawing of "district" lines which enclose the area in which a family may select a school must be drawn in such a way that they do not discriminate against any particular group's ability to attend the schools it chooses.

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f) accountability

The Educational Voucher Agency must be responsible for two kinds of accountability: "consumer protection" accountability, and "minimum standards" accountability.

While part of the accountability function is inherent in the EVA's ability to collect and disseminate information to parents about the eligible schools, the EVA must also be responsible for assuring that the individual schools do not carry on practices which could in any way be interpreted as defrauding the consumer. This includes strict supervision of all school advertising practices to assure the accuracy of all information given to the prospective customers. In addition, the EVA must ascertain whether or not schools are spending more than the determined allowance on advertising, which might give one school an unfair advantage over another.

Accountability to parents also includes assuring that minimum educational and physical standards are met by the eligible schools. It is not enough for the EVA to set those minimum standards and to assume that they will be met; schools must be inspected and evaluated regularly to assure compliance.

The Schools

Under the voucher program, each of the eligible schools is responsible for the determination of its own program over the minimum standards. That program may be an emphasis on science, or the arts, or foreign languages. It may also include different kinds of teaching techniques -- individualized

instruction, the open classroom, or team teaching. How that program is determined is the affair of each school, and can range from administrative fiat to a jointly determined program with parents, teachers, administrators, and outside consultants. In some cases, parent participation in program development may be part of the school's appeal.

Whatever the program developed, each school is responsible for providing the EVA with a complete description of the plan early enough in the Spring so that it may review the plan and be certain that it meets minimum standards. Late in the Spring, parents will be informed of the available options for the following year. Parents will choose schools for their children and schools will make their selections in the early part of the summer.

These are the most basic minimum requirements for the operation of a voucher education system. Only the state or community which decides to enact voucher education can decide the extent and the specifics of the final version.

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There are three major objections raised against voucher education:

a) It would lead to segregation.

b) It violates the constitutional separation of religion and public education.

c) The consumer analogy is inappropriate to education.

Before discussing these objections, the reader should take note of the following caveat: It is difficult, if not impossible,

to compare an ideal model for a new system to an existing system about which one already knows the range of human problems possible. Voucher education is still a model, with its full range of problems and possibilities yet unknown.

a) Voucher education would lead to segregation.

Voucher education was indeed used in Southern states as a method of circumventing the 1954 school desegregation decision by setting up a system of "private" segregated schools supported by state funds in the form of tuition grants. The courts, however, consistently found these programs to be in violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The most important decision in this series of cases was Poindexter v. Louisiana Financial Assistance Commission[9]. The case concerned a Louisiana law (Act 147) which called for educational tuition grants to be made directly to the parents. To attract entrepreneurs, the act waived the requirement that schools eligible for the grants be non-profit schools; and sanctioned the beginning of "educational co-operatives" -- or parent initiated schools. To circumvent an earlier decision that such schools were unconstitutional because state money was the predominant support for the school, Act 147 provided that less than one-half the school's support could come from the grants -- the rest had to come from parents. The judges found that:

> Decisions on the constitutionality of state involvement in private discrimination do not turn on whether the state aid adds up to 51 per cent or adds up only to 49 per cent of the support of the segregated institution. The criterion is whether the state is so significantly involved in the private discrimination as to render the state action violative of the equal protection clause. [10]

Thus voucher schools set up for the purpose of avoiding the public schools which were under court orders to desegregate were deemed unconstitutional by the courts.

No matter how the Southern state legislatures tried to disguise their purpose, the voucher schools in the South were clearly intended to maintain segregation. As such, the cases refer only to the possibility under voucher education that schools might be set up with segregation as an end. The problem also exists, however, that the admissions policy of a voucher school, while not intentionally discriminatory, might have a discriminatory effect. Although the kinds of admissions policies which might have this effect are as yet unknown factors, the Supreme Court's position on the de facto segregation that results from the use of place of residence as an admission requirement when residential patterns are segregated has been to rule that such policies must be changed. It is therefore unlikely that any admissions policy of a voucher school which clearly led to a segregated student body would pass with Court approval.

The third kind of segregation that might result from voucher education would be a product of independent choice.

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Whites might choose one set of schools, while blacks might choose another. This is the most difficult sort of segregation to combat because there is no discriminatory act taking place. A judicial guidepost here comes from the first of the desegregation decisions -- Brown v. Board of Education,[11] in which the court found that:

> (I)n the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.

Further, in Griffen v. State Board of Education (Va.) the court found that any program which encouraged whites to flee to private schools with state financial support tended to create segregation.[12]

Judicial precedents, however, only show how the court might be expected to react to voucher education schools which were segregated. They do not in themselves prevent policies which might lead to segregation. That would be the task and the responsibility of the Educational Voucher Agency, both in the review of the admissions policies of the eligible schools and in the establishment of district and transportation patterns. What neither the review of admissions policies or the careful planning of district and transportation lines could not prevent, however, would be voluntary segregation. To tell parents that they cannot send their child to one school or that they must send it to another to achieve a racial balance goes against the very concept of voucher education. Not doing so might very well mean the acceptance of segregation. Given the Supreme

Court's feeling that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal", it is even possible that, were voucher education to lead to voluntary segregation, that the Court might reject the entire system.

b) Voucher education would violate the constitutional separation of religion and public education.

Despite the amount of argument devoted to this possible disadvantage of voucher education, the conclusions about the viability of a voucher system that would include sectarian schools varies from commentator to commentator. Eliminating sectarian schools from a voucher program would leave the present public school "monopoly" essentially unchallenged, as 95% of the non-public schools in this country are sectarian.[13] Three major defenses of the inclusion of sectarian schools in a voucher system have been advanced.

1) The use of vouchers in sectarian schools does not lead to the "establishment of religion".
2) Both the G.I. Bill of Rights and Social Security medical benefits may be used in sectarian institutions.
3) The definition of public, private, and sectarian schools that presently exists would be changed under a voucher system, thereby rendering the question irrelevant.

The phrase "establishment of religion" comes from a 1970 Supreme Court decision on church exemptions from taxes, which, while dealing with tax exemptions rather than school

aid, seemed to indicate the Court's position on church-state separation.

> Each value judgment under the Religion clauses must...turn on whether particular acts in question are intended to establish or interfere with religious beliefs and practices or have the effect of doing so.[14]

Using this guidepost, several states passed "purchase of services" laws which allowed, through a variety of mechanisms, parents to be reimbursed for part of their expenses in sending their children to sectarian schools, on the rationale that part of the cost of educating the child was for non-sectarian skills. Voucher advocates saw the decision to mean that, as long as vouchers could not be seen to "establish" religion, they were not in violation of the Religion clauses.

Unfortunately, the decision made in 1970 was not an accurate guide. In June of 1973. the Supreme Court struck down New York and Pennsylvania state laws that reimbursed parents for part of the tuition paid to non-public schools. In the Court's opinion, these laws had "the impermissible effect of advancing religion."[15] Given the predominance of Catholic sectarian schools over those run by Protestants or Jews (not to speak of other religious denominations), the voucher system could be attacked for advancing that one religion over the others.

The second defense of the inclusion of sectarian schools in a voucher system is also based on judicial precedent, or more accurately, the lack of judicial objection to the use

of G.I. benefits in sectarian colleges and universities, both in the pursuit of liberal arts curricula, and in seminary training.[16] Also mentioned is the use of Social Security medical benefits in sectarian institutions. This occurs when the government gives the money to the individual -- who then chooses the institution in which he will spend the money. If these uses of government funds are permissible, why not vouchers?

Looking back to the Court's position on the use of vouchers to maintain segregated schools in the South, one must note that the Court concluded that, when individuals were merely the conduits for funds which contributed significantly to the maintenance of an institution, the state was involved in the process to the point where it could be held responsible for the results. It is at this point that Social Security and G.I. benefits differ from voucher benefits. G.I.'s and Social Security patients are not the main clientele of either the sectarian universities or hospitals.

Still, the only court decisions bearing directly on the use of vouchers pertains to their use in the South to circumvent desegregation, and it remains to be seen whether a voucher system which would include all school age children would be considered in the same light.

The third defense of the inclusion of sectarian schools was advanced by Jencks and the CSPP in their report to OEO on a proposed series of voucher experiments.

> Since the nineteenth century we have classified schools as "public" if they were owned and operated by a governmental body. We go right on calling colleges "public" even when they charge tuition that many people cannot afford. We also call academically exclusive high schools "public" when they have admissions requirements that only a handful of students can meet. And we call whole school systems "public" even though they refuse to give anyone information about what they are doing, how well they are doing it, and whether children are getting what their parents want. Conversely, we have always called schools "private" if they were owned and operated by private organizations. We have gone on calling these schools "private" even when, as sometimes happens, they are open to every applicant on a non-discriminatory basis, charge no tuition, and make whatever information they have about themselves available to anyone who asks.[17]

Therefore, Jencks and his associates recommend that we revise our definitions, calling a school "public" if it were open to everyone on a non-discriminatory basis, if it charged no tuition, and if it provided full information about itself to anyone interested.'[18] Any school not willing to comply would be labeled "private". Having thus redefined public and private schools, vouchers could be used only at "public" schools.

While this redefinition of American schools may at first sound a bit far-fetched, one should consider the origin of the separation between public and sectarian schools. The early Americans came from societies, that, if not ruled by the church, were dominated by the church. Indeed, many came to escape religious persecution in their mother countries. The separation of church and state was seen as a protection

against the re-emergence of a church dominated society. In the present situation, such a fear seems perhaps outdated. In fact, the Canadians, in an attempt to protect religious freedom, favor the opposite policy -- they feel all schools of any religion deserve state support.[19] Perhaps voucher education would bring a re-evaluation of the necessity for the separation of religion and education in modern society.

Whether or not a voucher system that included sectarian schools would be acceptable to the public and the courts remains to be seen, and the entire issue is much less clear than that involving possible segregation resulting from the use of vouchers.

c) The consumer analogy is inappropriate to education.

Both Milton Friedman and the Center for the Study of Public Policy view voucher education as a method of improving the quality of schooling by removing the public education system from the present protection it enjoys as a monopoly and by subjecting it to the competitive pressures of the market. This would give parents more choice as consumers of educational services. The schools whose services were found to be unsatisfactory would lose their customers unless they changed their practices. This pressure to satisfy consumers, according to Friedman and the CSPP, would bring a degree of accountability presently impossible in the educational system, forcing schools to reform in order to survive. This is certainly true to an extent, but there are limitations.

> Imagine a school system composed of a diverse collection of schools run by public authorities, private business corporations, teachers' collectives, parent groups, and community development corporations. The only parental power...would rest on consumer choice from among whatever options the schooling "producers" happen to be offering. ...The means of production is not controlled by the people who must make do with what is produced, and so it is possible for producers to manipulate and restrict their offerings for their own purposes. Under such conditions it is probably wishful thinking to say that parents will have more power over the nature of schooling or that the schools will need to be more responsive.[20]

While this may be an overstatement of what might occur under voucher education, planners should recognize that consumer choice needs to be defended. Some schools may include parents in the planning process as part of their appeal, but in the case of other schools, the authors of a voucher system may want to include a requirement of a governing board with parents included for all voucher schools.

If there is to be competition with the present public system from other schools, especially from independently initiated schools, new schools must have an equal chance in the competition. Otherwise the freedom to establish alternative schools may be little more than rhetoric. In an open market, small new businesses are at a distinct disadvantage when they seek to compete with large, well-established businesses that already possess not only the labor, but also the facilities and the experiential knowledge new businesses often lack. New schools would probably suffer the same way unless given some kind of additional start-up aid.

What kind of educational reforms can be expected from subjecting schools to market pressures? Here we must again look to experience in the market. While it is no doubt true that in certain cases industrial research tries to find the ideal method of solving consumers problems, it is also true that industries spend a good deal of their efforts trying to make products marginally different from those of their competitors -- trying to make a product more attractive to the consumer at the minimum cost to the producer. How does this process of marginal reform, likely to be brought about by voucher education, compare with the present emphasis in educational research on finding the ideal solution to educational problems? While education is an area in which one hesitates to be satisfied with marginal reforms, the search for ideal reforms has been unproductive, for a variety of reasons. Marginal reforms may be preferable to the few or no reforms brought by existing methods.

If industrial research is aimed at the improvement of the product, market research is aimed at what people will buy and why. Market competition has raised advertising from the level of crude propaganda to sophisticated psychological manipulation of the prospective consumer. The Educational Voucher Agency could regulate advertising to the extent that no school could spend more than a given amount on advertising or engage in fraudulent practices. But some consumers are shrewder and better informed than others, and the poor are usually the

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ones that suffer in their lesser ability to discriminate among products. It is another of the unanswered questions about voucher education whether this inequality in consumer ability would be reflected in the choice of schools, and if so, whether it might be detrimental to the education of the children of the poor.

Another advantage that Milton Friedman sees coming from voucher education is the growing efficiency of schools under more business-minded leadership.

> The delivery of groceries is not the same as the production of hi-fi equipment. Yet both are highly efficient and technologically progressive for the same reason: They are conducted mostly by private enterprise operating in a competitive market. 21

This may be stretching the analogy too far. Just how much do schools resemble businesses? While the technology necessary to produce hi-fi parts or to deliver groceries are quite clear (although improvable) education is burdened with a "fuzzy" technology.[22] It is difficult, if not impossible, to know what combination of factors add up to learning in any given child. If a child is not learning, does that mean that the "teaching machine" is malfunctioning? Which teaching machine -- the teachers or the school? Which teacher? And how does one "repair" a teacher's performance? Can one treat teachers like parts of a machine? What if any variety of social, political or economic factors are involved -- how can a voucher school be held responsible for problems outside the classroom?

Private schools are often raised as examples of schools which must respond to market pressure in order to survive -- and many do survive, and many do provide students with the education their parents desire. This may be less a result of market competition, however, than of other aspects of the private schools as they now exist. Many select students using an entrance examination, assuring themselves an elite student body that is almost assured to succeed. Most have classes half the size of those in public schools, affording students at least twice the amount of teachers' attentions. And in some cases, although fewer than one might expect, parents who pay directly for the education of their children (in addition to supporting public schools through their taxes) are concerned about the progress of their child enough to take an active role in the process. This parental concern exists, however, in the public school population, although it may be more difficult for a family where both parents must work to manifest that concern than for a family with more leisure time available. While vouchers should make the parent feel more directly involved in the education of the child, the same limitations on the parent's ability to act on this concern will remain.

While many questions remain about the appropriateness of the consumer analogy in voucher education, it is true that parents would have more choice about where and how to educate their children; that new schools would spring up to answer unmet

needs, and that, for better or worse, any school not succeeding in "educating" the child (however that is defined and measured) would lose its customers to the schools that were doing a better job.

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At present, the opposition to voucher education are more outspoken than are the supporters. Even these supporters differ among themselves as to what exactly a voucher program should be, and what is acceptable to one is not acceptable to the other. The final supporting coalition could no doubt depend on the specific plan being advocated. Whatever the plan, and the supporting coalition, it would have to face still (and noisy) opposition.

> The whole public school establishment (the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the American Association of School Administrators, the National School Boards Association, and the National Congress of Parents and Teachers), as well as religious groups (the Baptist Joint Committee and the American Jewish Congress) and secular organizations (the American Civil Liberties Union), are now formally opposed to vouchers.[23]

Voucher education is unacceptable to some for economic reasons. Both the Coons, Sugarman and Clune plan and the Jencks and the CSPP plan are unmistakeable redistributive policies, and as economist Eli Ginzberg points out,[24] redistributive policies have not been popular in the recent policies of this country. What redistributive efforts were able to overcome this political barrier were cut so as to make any real redistributive effect minimal. On the other

hand, any voucher program which allowed parents to add to the original value of the voucher would lead to differences in the purchasing power of individual parents and thus to inequalities in the distribution of educational resources.

To add to this, a voucher system is likely to be more expensive than the present system.[25] It would include the additional cost of children now attending private and sectarian school whose parents now pay that expense from their own pockets. It would include the cost of transportation sufficient to assure that no child will be unable to attend the school of his parents' choice because of lack of transportation. It would also include the cost of the massive regulatory and administrative apparatus of the Education Voucher Agency, without which the entire system is untenable to one set of its authors. Says the report of the Center for the Study of Public Policy, an unregulated voucher system "could be the most serious setback for the education of disadvantaged children in the history of the United States."[26] With school taxes already an area in which the taxpayer has demonstrated less than enthusiasm about higher rates, one would have to build a very strong case for voucher education to convince taxpayers to shoulder an even greater burden.

While the question of including sectarian schools in a voucher system remains unsettled by the courts, the coalition opposed to vouchers is the very same coalition that has been

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vigorously opposed to any form of aid to sectarian schools.[27] These people would have to be convinced that religion would not be advanced or established in violation of the Constitution, or that any such effect is outweighed by the possible benefits of a voucher system.

The possibility of segregation under a voucher system is another area which brings the opposition to its feet. While a vigilant regulatory Educational Voucher System could possibly prevent discrimination in admissions or transportation policies that would lead to segregation, there is no way to prevent voluntary segregation. Ironically, if this voluntary segregation did not occur, voucher education might lead to greater integration of the schools than under the present geographically districted system.

> By virtue of more income, more political power, and housing discrimination, middle-class whites have succeeded in removing themselves from close contact with disadvantaged blacks. It is fatuous to believe that the white community will permit a voucher system to operate so as to remove the barriers that they have so laboriously erected to protect themselves and their children from what they consider to be the undesirable behavior patterns of the disadvantaged.[28]

While these words from Eli Ginzberg seem strong, opposition to desegregation plans is the rule rather than the exception in recent years, and if voucher education were seen as a way to desegregate the schools, it is unlikely these same people would allow it to pass.

Last, but not least, voucher education is unacceptable to the entire public school establishment. While it is true

that this group has a vested interest in maintaining the public system as it now exists, this is not the only basis for their opposition. Much more important is the total lack of job security for school personnel under a voucher system. There are many questions which professional educators would want answered. Would all educators now in unions, continue to be in unions? Would there be one blanket contract for the same areas now covered or a separate contract for each individual educational enterprise or school building? Or should there be a blanket contract for a state as a whole? How would job security be dealt with? Would a teacher obtain tenure only within a narrow bargaining unit? How for example does Holland, which has a form of voucher education, deal with the question of teacher tenure? If a school "went out of business", would the teacher simply be out of a job or guaranteed another job by the state or district? If a school had a teacher whom school management considered ineffective, could the teacher be terminated? If not, how could the school control its own destiny? Yet industrial firms with union contracts are faced with similar problems, at least in lower level positions. Would all teachers receive the same salary for similar education and experience or would each bargaining unit negotiate its own wages and benefits? Could that result in a concentration of the best talent in a few schools? Who would share in the profits of a school, stockholders, teachers, administrators, parents? And how, indeed, are schools to make decisions about who or what is to blame if the school does not succeed in the market?

A situation could arise where one school would lose students not because any of its teachers were less than competent, but because another school might have more cleverly advertised itself. While teachers are now perhaps overprotected, and this makes the process of change monumentally difficult, it is not hard to understand why teachers and administrators are so firmly opposed to voucher education. They are a powerful force of opposition that voucher advocates must overcome if voucher education is to be adopted.

Those supporting vouchers are of varied backgrounds and political leanings, and the differences among them may be as great as the differences between supporters and opposers of voucher education. The battle for political acceptance of voucher education would be, at the very least, a difficult struggle.

Conclusion

Voucher education is not without advantages, despite the number of possible complications. Stephen Arons lists the following:

> --Halting the present situation in which only the rich and those with support from religious institutions can escape public schools, and in which economic and class separation is made easy.
>
> --Shifting the source of initiative for school reform to families by making it possible for them to exercise more choice.
>
> --Increasing economic and political power of individuals over their children's education.
>
> --Making possible not only geographically decentralized schools, but school communities based on many other shared values.
>
> --Providing effective means for preventing racial and economic discrimination and for insuring the presence of adequate resources for all school children.
>
> --Increasing the diversity of American education and its ability to experiment by encouraging alternative schools and breaking down the present public school monopoly.
>
> --Reducing the size of decision-making units and encouraging a less bureaucratic relationship between school and family.
>
> --Removing the state from determination of educational policy except as regards absolute minimums (preventing discrimination, insuring equal resources, providing basic information, securing minimum educational standards).
>
> --Supporting the growing movement of community and free schools.[29]

Thus the possible complications or disadvantages of voucher education must be carefully weighed against the possible benefits which might accrue from the new system. To reiterate,

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these disadvantages are: Voucher education could not prevent the emergence of voluntarily segregated schools.

Voucher education violates the constitutional separation of religion and education.

Voucher education is based on a consumer analogy that is now wholly appropriate to education.

Voucher education faces strong opposition from a number of groups, making its political feasibility questionable.

Voucher education is not a panacea. Whether the effects of a voucher system would ultimately be beneficial or not is unknown. One thing is certain -- voucher education would have drastic effects on a critical area of American life.

Alum Rock

Alum Rock (San Jose), California, is the site of the only official voucher education experiment in the United States. Funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity, the model used is the regulated compensatory model developed by Jencks and the Center for the Study of Public Policy. Actually, the Alum Rock program is "a sort of voucher experiment".[30] Only public schools are included, and of the twenty-four public schools in the district, only six were involved in 1972-73 (the initial year of the experiment), and only thirteen in 1973-74. Under the experimental design, each school must submit or offer at least three separate programs or "minischools". As it turned out, one of the three programs in each school concentrated on basic skills.

In the first year, only 5% of the parents used the option to leave their neighborhood schools. That group grew to 10% in the second year, and may continue to grow as the experiment continues.[31]

Of the $7,000,000 grant, almost half that amount was spent on administration and evaluation.[32] While two years is too little to yield reliable results in educational experiments (CSPP suggested five to eight years), one interesting result unofficially noted is that parents who were found to be less knowledgable about their educational options at the beginning of the experiment have now learned

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more about their options -- enough to change the distribution of knowledge pattern that existed at the beginning, with middle-class whites knowing more than lower-class whites, who knew more than blacks, who knew more than Chicanos who spoke English, who knew more than Chicanos who spoke only Spanish. After two years of vouchers, the bottom of this pattern has begun to rise faster than the top. This could offset the expected problem with vouchers that the unequal distribution of knowledge would lead to the inequal distribution of educational resources.

The Alum Rock program has only begun, and no hard conclusions can yet be drawn. Even when the final conclusions are in, one must be careful not to confuse the limited experimental program in Alum Rock with a state-wide program with different limits and probably different problems. The conclusions will provide us with more knowledge than we now have about how a real voucher system works -- even in a modified form.

Notes

[1]Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, cited in George LaNoue, Educational Vouchers: Concepts and Controversies, (New York, Teachers College Press, 1972) p. 71.

[2]Tom Paine, cited in Stephen Arons "The Peaceful Uses of Education Vouchers", in George LaNoue, op. cit., p. 71

[3]John Stuart Mill, On Liberty, cited in George LaNoue, op. cit., pp. 3-8.

[4]Milton Friedman, "The Voucher Idea", in The New York Times (Magazine section) September 9, 1973, p. 22.

[5]Stephen Arons, op. cit., p. 78.

[6]Center for the Study of Public Policy, Education Vouchers: A Report on Financing Elementary Education by Grants to Parents, (Cambridge, Mass., December , 1970), p. 77.

[7]Patricia Sexton, Education and Income, (New York, The Viking Press, 1961).

[8]The first four of these responsibilities are drawn from the report of the Center for the Study of Public Policy, while the last two are drawn from recommendations by Stephen Arons, op. cit.

[9]Poindexter v. Louisiana Financial Assistance Commission, 275 F. Supp. 833 (1967) U.S. District Court E. D. Louisiana. August 26, 1967.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)

[12]Griffen v. State Board of Education, 377, U.S. 218 (1964)

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[13]George LaNoue, "Vouchers, the End of Public Education?" in George LaNoue, op. cit., p. 132.

[14]Walter McCann and Judith Areen, "Vouchers and the Citizen - Some Legal Questions", in George LaNoue, op. cit., p. 112.

[15]Cited by Milton Friedman, op. cit., p. 22.

[16]Walter McCann and Judith Areen, op. cit., p. 122n.

[17]Center for the Study of Public Policy, op. cit., p. 13.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Robert Fulford, "Canada Wants Out (of the United States)", New York Times (Magazine section), April 21, 1974, p. 36.

[20]Stephen Arons, op. cit., p. 92.

[21]Milton Friedman, op. cit., p. 22.

[22]Michael D. Cohen, James G. March, and Johan P. Olsen, A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice", Administrative Science Quarterly, March, 1972, p. 1.

[23]George LaNoue, op. cit., p. vi.

[24]Eli Ginzberg, "The Economics of the Voucher System", in George LaNoue, op. cit., p. 100.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Center for the Study of Public Policy, op. cit., p. 17.

[27]George LaNoue, op. cit., p. vi.

[28]Eli Ginzberg, op, cit., p. 106.

[29]Stephen Arons, op. cit., p. 95.

[30]Evan Jenkins, "A sort of voucher system", The New York Times (Magazine section), September 23, 1974, p. 65.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Ibid.